POLI 373: War and Politics

Tuesday & Thursday, 11:20a-12:40p
Fall 2020
Rice University

Contact Information

Instructor: Jared Oestman
Email: jared.oestman@rice.edu
Office Hours: Thursday 2-5 pm or by appointment

**Note about office hours: Official office hours will be held Thursdays from 2-5 pm. If you would like to meet please go to the following link and schedule a meeting any time during regular office hours. We can then meet via Zoom (I will send a link): https://calendly.com/jo18*
If you need to meet outside of regular office hours, let me know and we can work something out.

Overview

What is *war*? Why does it occur?

Wars are costly. Hundreds, thousands, and even millions of people have lost their lives as a result of armed conflicts. Just as many have been physically displaced. Wars destroy capital and infrastructure and create massive public health and food security problems. Although we can read news coverage of some form of political violence on an almost daily basis, wars are thankfully rare events. Still, the fact that wars occur poses a puzzle that scholars of conflict have worked hard to understand for decades: If war is costly, why do states choose to fight rather than resolve their disputes through other means?

Understanding the causes of war is a significant first step for both scholars and policymakers to make optimal prescriptions for peace. This course aims to introduce students to the causes of war, with a focus on both general theories of war and empirical assessments of these theories. Students will also learn about variation in what happens during the course of wars and how wars may end.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course students should be able to:

- Learn and apply a basic theoretical framework to analyze both the causes and outcomes of previous wars.
- Display knowledge of select topics related to war and politics through development and presentation of case studies.
- Assess potential merits and limitations of practical approaches to conflict management/resolution.

Texts and Materials

We will be reading all of the chapters from the following electronic text which you may purchase on Amazon:

Reiter, Dan (ed.), 2018. *Understanding War and Peace*. url: `understandingwarandpeace.com`

All other texts will be uploaded under each topic module in Canvas.

Grades

Grades will be determined in the manner described below. The Rice University Honor Code applies to work for this course.

10%- Participation

Given the current circumstances, the attendance policy for this course will be flexible. Ideally, all students should complete the assigned reading and lecture material before each class and arrive prepared to discuss this material synchronously. Your active participation in the class contributes to the quality of your own learning and that of others. Participation includes attending class, asking questions, answering questions, and offering opinions. Multiple modalities will be provided throughout the semester to promote greater engagement and participation. At the end of the semester, each student will receive a grade on a scale of 1-10 on the quality of participation.

Attendance policy: All students who live four or fewer time zones away from the Central Time Zone (HTX time), are expected to attend every class synchronously via Zoom. All students who are living in a time zone that is more than 4 hours from the Central Time Zone are expect to either attend synchronously via Zoom or to work out in advance with the instructor a suitable solution for asynchronous attendance.

***Note for those who participate asynchronously:**

If any student needs to participate in the course asynchronously, the expectations for participation are similar to those stated above. However, instead of attending class sessions "live" asynchronous students should do the readings and watch the recordings from the class sessions. Asynchronous students will be expected to write a short memo (no more than three pages) for each week in which there are assigned readings and lecture material. Each memo should address the following: 1) What are the key (2-3) takeaways from the lecture and readings for that week? 2) What is one question or idea that you found most interesting from the discussion/lecture/readings? The

memo should briefly explain your reasoning for each of these points. Weekly memos should be submitted by no later than midnight on Friday of each week. A letter grade will be assigned to each memo. At the end of the semester I will drop the two lowest grades from the memos.

***Note regarding synchronous participation via Zoom** During synchronous sessions, all students are expected to have their video camera on. As well, all microphones should be muted, except those of the individuals who are talking. Students needing an accommodation for using their camera or microphone should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to discuss and work out needed adjustments.

20%- Case Study Presentations (2 group presentations @ 5% each & 1 individual presentation @ 10%)

In this class, each student will have three opportunities to develop and present on a case study that ties into the lecture and reading for a given week (see the schedule of the topics below). For these presentations a set guidelines will be provided for each presenter (and for group presentations, teams) to follow in developing the presentation. For two of the weeks all students will work with a team to develop and present presentations on the same topic. The primary purpose of this will be for students to begin to consider how they will write their first two analytic papers. For subsequent weeks, individuals will present on one chosen topic. Early in the semester, students will have the opportunity to indicate their preference for the topics on which they would like to present for the individual presentations. Each presentation should be developed for an audience of both policymakers and "lay" persons. Each presentation should apply the theoretical explanations from the readings on the given topic from a "basic" level of understanding as well as identify key recommendations for leaders to consider when making decisions related to the area of focus. Grades will be determined based on the quality of each presentation in terms of how well they follow the instructions (forthcoming). Each presentation should be delivered using PowerPoint or some other program that allows for the creation of a slide deck that can be uploaded to Canvas. Students are expected to submit their slides 24 hours in advance of class to the instructor so that they can be shared on the screen for all to see during the presentation. The slides will be posted to Canvas on the day of the presentations. Finally, for the group presentations, each student that presented must send a brief email to the instructor by the end of the day that indicates the role that both they and each member of the group played in developing the presentation.

***Note for those who participate asynchronously:**

Those participating in the course asynchronously are also expected to participate in the group and individual presentations. Presentation groups with asynchronous members should determine how to involve those members in both developing and delivering the presentation. One suggestion is to record a voice over of the presentation prior to class. In such instances, it will most likely work best for the entire presentation to be prerecorded. For the individual presentations, students may provide a prerecorded presentation with both audio and visual components.

If you have any questions about how to record your presentations, please see me during office hours or email me. I will make it a point to provide further guidance for those who need assistance figuring out the technicalities of this.

40%-Analytic Papers (2 @ 20% each)

Each student will write two analytic papers throughout the semester. The first paper will require the student to estimate the costs of a prior war. There are two parts for the second paper: 1. Students will develop an explanation for a "most likely" cause of the same war 2. Students will discuss explanations for the duration and outcomes of the conflict. These are to be short papers (no more than 6 pages each). For each paper, each student will have the opportunity to receive and provide one "peer" review to a colleague (see below). This means that students will submit their papers a few days prior to the final deadline to receive feedback from a classmate. After receiving this feedback, students will then have the opportunity to improve that draft for the final submission. Each student should submit the comments from their reviewer along with the final draft of their paper. Whether improvements were made between the early and final drafts will be taken into consideration for final grading along with the reviewer's feedback. Further instructions and guidance will be provided in class and/or on Canvas.

Late submission policy: Each late submission will receive a 0.5 point reduction from the final grade. If something is preventing you from submitting an assignment, either to me or a peer reviewer, on time you are expected to notify me as soon as possible. I will do my best to work with you and find solutions to help you submit the assignment. I may choose to waive deductions penalties, but this will be handled on a case by case basis.

10%-Peer Reviews (2 @ 5% each)

For each of the two analytic papers, each student will be expected to write a (no more than) two page peer review of another colleague's paper. The goal will be for each reviewer to help another colleague improve both the quality and insight of their writing prior to submitting for a final grade. I will provide a grading rubric and additional guidance in class for writing your reviews.

Late submission policy for peer reviews: If you're unable to get your peer review submitted to the original author on time, you should let me and the author know. Failure to communicate ahead of time will result in a 0% grade on the peer review as well as a deduction of one letter grade on the peer reviewer's analytic paper.

20% Final Comprehensive Exam

There will be one course final. This will be a "take-home" exam. Students will be required to develop an essay-formatted answer in response to one question from a list nine possible questions. Each possible question will correspond with one of the topics from lectures/readings. The exams are to be fully conducted in Canvas. More information will be forthcoming.

Canvas

Students are expected to check the course site on Canvas frequently. Slides from class, links or PDFs for the readings assigned for class, announcements, recordings, and more will be posted to Canvas. In addition, students should submit their final paper assignments through Canvas. Both memos from asynchronous students and peer reviews should be submitted through email: Memos should be sent directly to the instructor and peer reviews should be submitted directly to the original author. For the analytic papers, please append the peer review to the final draft that you submit through Canvas.

Rice Honor Code

In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, a code that you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the Honor System Handbook at http://honor.rice.edu/honor-system-handbook/. This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

Disability Resource Center

If any student has a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance they should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Disability Resource Center (Allen Center, Room 111 / adarice@rice.edu / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with the instructor to discuss their accommodation needs at the beginning of the semester or when diagnosed if it occurs during the semester.

Technology Resources

Since this course will take place remotely, students must have a working computer with a video camera, speaker and a microphone, and a working internet connection that allows them to be on video. Students should test their equipment before joining class. Students should contact the Dean of Undergraduates if they have concerns about meeting this requirement.

Privacy & Confidentiality

In line with FERPA requirements, recorded classroom discussions involving students will be available only to students officially registered and enrolled in the class. If you have concerns about appearing on these recording, please contact the instructor ahead of time.

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

Course Schedule

The course is structured by modules. Each module will cover one main topic related to the course. At the beginning of each module, students should do the readings and watch the

prerecorded lectures prior to attending class. The length of the lectures will count toward the allotted time for class. On days that a lecture is scheduled, we will meet synchronously during the remainder of the allotted time as scheduled. This time will be used for discussion of the reading and lecture material. Attending these sessions is highly encouraged as it contributes to the overall quality of the course. Everyone is also highly encouraged to attend sessions synchronously during the days on which presentations are scheduled.

If, in any week, you are unable to attend either the discussion periods or lectures synchronously, you will be expected to write a memo on the material for that week (as described above).

Introduction

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

Course Introduction, overview of the syllabus and case study assignments/presentation schedule.

The Costs of War

Thursday, August 27, 2020

Overview of costs of war writing assignment and presentations

Tuesday, September 1, 2020

Optional Readings:

Bilmes and Stiglitz 2006 "The Economic Costs of the Iraq War: An Appraisal Three Years After the Beginning of the Conflict" *NBER working paper*

Daggett 2010 "Costs of Major U.S. Wars" *Congressional Research Service*

Explore Brown University's "Costs of War" website, and specifically the documents linked under the "Costs" tab. https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs

Thursday, September 3, 2020

Work day- Work on group presentations of costs of war case studies

Tuesday, September 8, 2020

Delivery of group presentations on the costs of war case studies.

Thursday, September 10, 2020

Finish up costs of war presentations

Overview of causes of war group writing assignment

Causes of War

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

From *Understanding War and Peace*:
ch 1 "Bargaining and War" by Dan Reiter
Optional Reading:
Fearon 1995 "Rationalist Explanations for War" *International Organization*
Sanchez-Pages 2010 "The Diplomacy of Arms: Conflict as a Negotiation Instrument" voxeu.org

Thursday, September 17, 2020

Work day- Work on group presentations on the causes of war case studies

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

Group presentations on causes of war case studies.

Thursday, September 24, 2020

Finish group presentations on causes of war case studies.
*Assignment 1: Costs of war analysis due by 12am (midnight, Sep. 23) to peer reviewer.

International Alliances

Tuesday, September 29, 2020

From *Understanding War and Peace*:
ch 2 "International Alliances" by Dan Reiter
Optional Reading:
Leeds 2003 "Do Alliances Deter Aggression" *American Journal of Political Science*
Mazarr 2018 "Understanding Deterrence" RAND
*Analytic Paper 1: Peer reviews due back to authors by 12pm (noon).

Thursday, October 1, 2020

Individual presentations on international alliances case studies.

Nuclear Weapons

Tuesday, October 6, 2020

From *Understanding War and Peace*:

ch 3 "Nuclear Weapons" by Michael C. Horowitz

Lapowsky 2016 "Dear Donald Trump, This is Why Nuclear Weapons are Bad" *Wired*

Braut-Hegghammer 2020 "2020 is the Year to Worry About Nuclear Weapons" *The Monkey Cage*

Optional Readings:

Rauchhaus 2009 "Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*

*Analytic Paper 1: Final submission for costs of war analysis (including comments from the reviewer) due by 12 am (midnight Oct. 7).

Thursday, October 8, 2020

Individual presentations on the politics of nuclear weapons case studies.

Domestic Politics and War

Tuesday, October 13, 2020

From *Understanding War and Peace*:

ch 4 "Leaders, Institutions, and Foreign Policy" by Michael C. Horowitz

Carter 2020 "How the Good War Went Bad: America's Slow Motion Failure in Afghanistan" *Foreign Affairs*

Thursday, October 15, 2020

Individual presentations on leaders and war case studies.

Tuesday, October 20, 2020

From *Understanding War and Peace*:

ch 5 "Public Opinion and Conflict" by Christopher Gelpi

Gelpi and Mueller 2006 "The Cost of War" *Foreign Affairs*

Thursday, October 22, 2020

Individual presentations on public opinion and conflict.

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

From *Understanding War and Peace*:

ch 6 "Economics and War" by Paul Poast

Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution

Thursday, October 29, 2020

From *Understanding War and Peace*:

ch 7 "Third Party Peacemaking and Peacekeeping" by Kyle Beardsley

Optional Reading:

Fortna 2004 "Interstate Peacekeeping: Causal Mechanisms and Empirical Effects" *World Politics*

*Analytic Paper 2: The causes and outcomes of war analysis due by midnight to peer reviewer

Tuesday, November 3, 2020

Election day.

Please use the normally allotted class time to vote. If you're able and choose to do so, please be safe. As well, begin working on your revisions of Analytic Paper 2. I will also be available to meet at most points during the day.

*Analytic Paper 2: Comments from peer reviewers due back to authors by 12pm (noon).

Thursday, November 5, 2020

Individual presentations on UN peacekeeping case studies.

Civil War

Tuesday, November 10, 2020

From *Understanding War and Peace*:

ch 8 "Civil Wars" by Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham

Optional Reading:

Walter 2017 "The New New Civil Wars" *Annual Review of Political Science*

Thursday, November 17, 2020

Individual presentations on civil war case studies.

Environment and Conflict

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

From *Understanding War and Peace*:

ch 9 "Environment and Conflict" by Cullen Hendrix

Moyer and Kaplan 2020 "Will the Coronavirus Fuel Conflict?" *Foreign Policy*

Wood and Wright 2020 "Pandemics and Political Violence" *Political Violence at a Glance*

*Analytic Paper 2: Final submission for causes of war analysis (including comments from the reviewer) due by midnight.

The Decline of War

Thursday, November 19, 2020

Last Day of Class

Goldstein 2011 "Think Again: War. World Peace Could be Closer than You Think" *Foreign Policy*

Singer 2011 "Is Violence History?" *The New York Times*

Fazal and Poast 2019 "War is Not Over" *Foreign Affairs*

Wednesday-Monday, December 9-14, 2020

Comprehensive exam will be posted on Canvas by 7 am on December 9.

Submit exam answers via Canvas no later than Wednesday, December 14 by 11:59pm.